



The Exceptional Student Services (ESS) mission is to provide high quality service that builds capacity to improve outcomes for all students. The vision of ESS is that all students, including students with a disability, are well prepared for the next step, whether that is college, technical/trade school, career, job, or other means of engagement. To achieve this vision, ESS is establishing a system of supports that wraps around educators to improve student outcomes—academically, behaviorally, and functionally.

## Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE)

On October 1, 2013, the U.S. Department of Education announced that it was awarding the PROMISE grant of more than \$211 million to five individual states and a six-state consortium. The PROMISE (Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income) grant was created for states to establish and operate model demonstration projects over a five-year period.



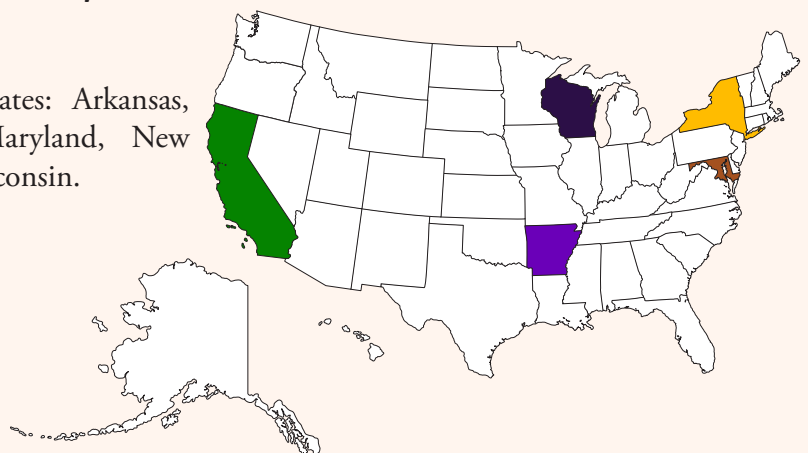
their families. Outcomes may include higher graduation rates from high school, better preparation of students for college, more completions of postsecondary education, increased job training opportunities for participants, greater access to competitive employment in integrated settings, and long-term reductions in reliance on SSI.

The model demonstration projects, known collectively as the PROMISE Initiative, were designed to improve the education, employment outcomes, and service provisions for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients and

PROMISE is a combined initiative of the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Social Security Administration, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Labor.

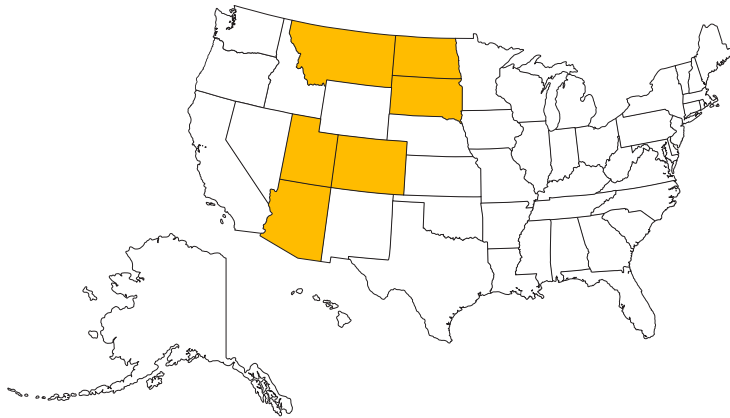
### PROMISE Grant Recipients

PROMISE States: Arkansas, California, Maryland, New York, and Wisconsin.



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ASPIRE (Six-state consortium) Arizona, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Utah.



## Achieving Success by Promoting Readiness for Education and Employment (ASPIRE)

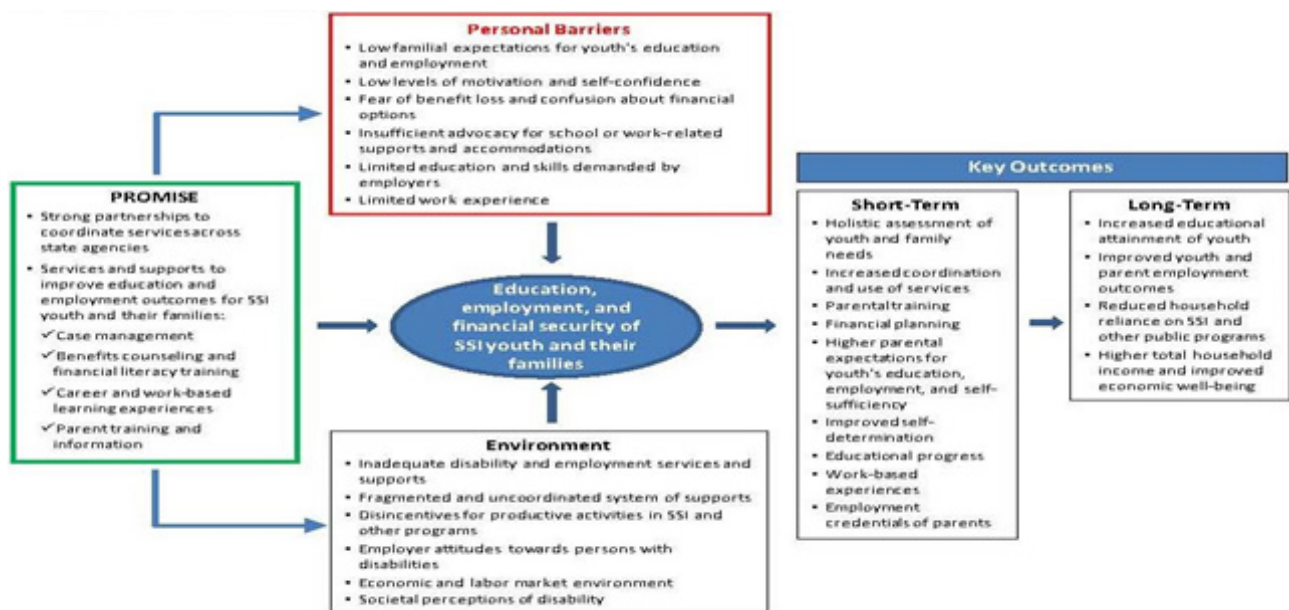
The consortium name—ASPIRE—is an acronym reflecting the purpose of this project, as well as its name: “Achieving Success in Promoting Readiness for Education and Employment.” Beyond the acronym, the word stands as a message to youth and families “to dream, to imagine, to strive for a better life.”

### Core Components of PROMISE Programs

The federal promoters of the PROMISE Initiative anticipate that the grantees will work with the target population to identify innovative methods of providing service that are grounded in evidence-based practices and to ultimately improve self-sufficiency for youth and families. In order to achieve such results, the promoters have included a set of identified services in the core components as follows:

- Formal agency-level partnerships
- Case management
- Benefits counseling and financial literacy training
- Career and work-based learning experiences
- Parent training and information

Six states have aligned to create a western consortium to develop interventions to address the gaps that exist in opportunities and outcomes for students and to evaluate the project’s formation and implementation. ASPIRE will implement the PROMISE Initiative in diverse settings—urban, rural, remote, and Native American communities—in six states: Arizona, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Utah. Although the program services and staff training will be standardized across the states, implementation will vary by state with respect to the agencies and staff delivering the services and the delivery methods. The project will coordinate services to address the particular needs of the youth so that they can succeed in school, prepare for and obtain employment, and assist their families in achieving greater financial self-sufficiency.



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**The purpose of ASPIRE is to**

- 1) Increase a youth and family’s overall household income and thereby reduce the household’s dependence upon public benefits, by increasing educational attainment and advancing career achievement.
- 2) Inform federal policymakers in all the four federal agencies through evaluation of interventions and outcomes.

In addition to the services that the program will provide, ASPIRE will use community conversations to engage community leaders, employers, civic groups, public officials, and others in ways that will increase opportunities for ASPIRE participants and their families to expand their social and labor market assets.

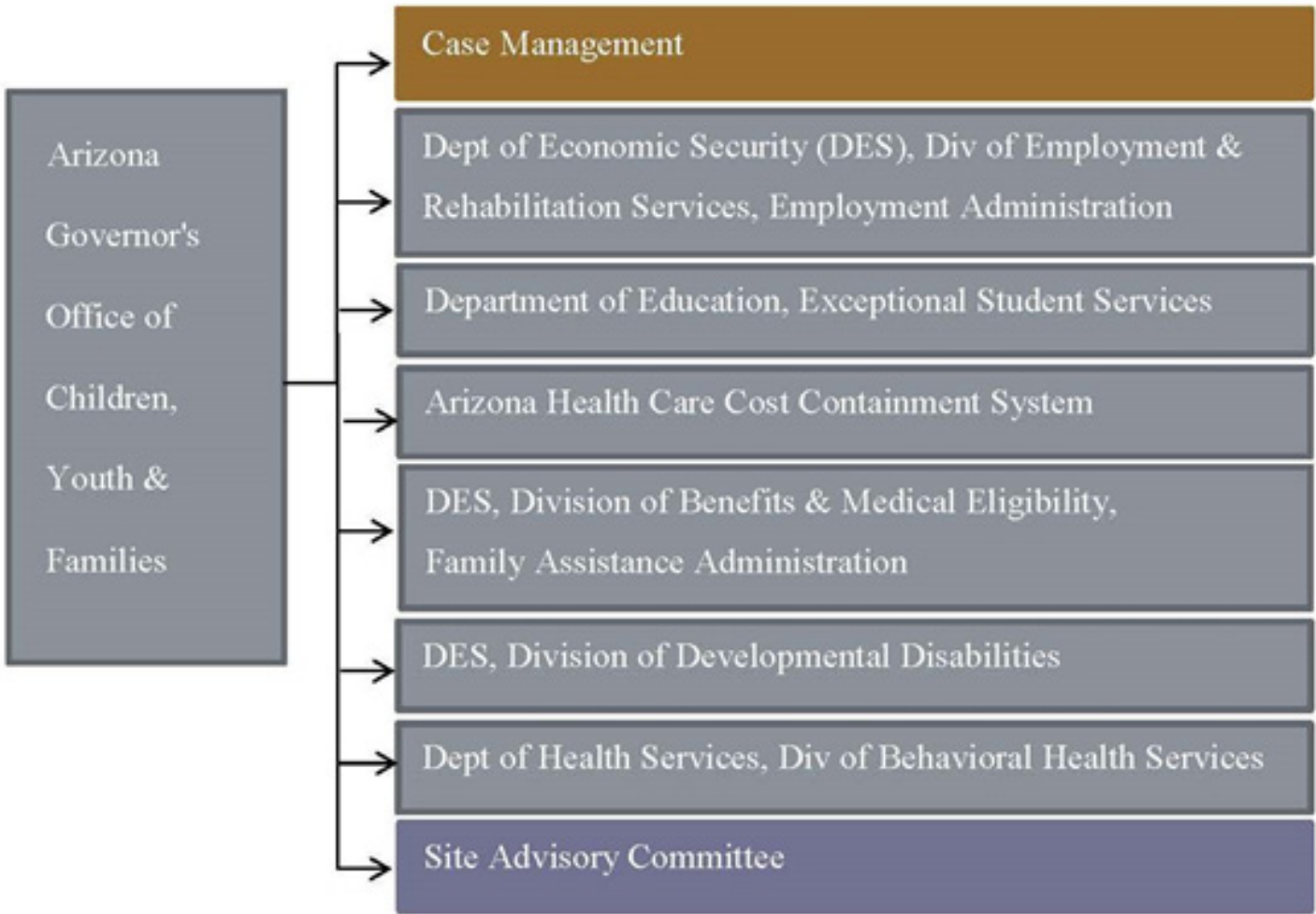
The age range of 14 to 16 is a critical time in the development of any child’s vocational expectations and readiness. When a child has a disability and lives in a family with limited

income, opportunities for receiving services may be missed because of delayed development, health concerns, or low expectations in general. Yet a coordinated system of services typically does not exist to assist in this time of transition.

The resources of the ASPIRE project will be invested in the participants to enable them to move beyond a life of poverty and unemployment, disadvantage, and devalued lives to increased self-determination, independence, and financial self-sufficiency.

**Consortium Partnerships**

All six consortium states have obtained commitment from the agencies in their states that correspond to the Arizona agencies listed below (referred to as partner agencies) to cooperate in carrying out the ASPIRE project. This is an unprecedented multi-state partnership involving all the key state agencies critical to providing wraparound services and supports to the target population.



## Evaluation

A national evaluator, MPR (Mathematica Policy Research), will conduct a rigorous evaluation of the PROMISE Initiative to determine its effectiveness at improving the educational employment outcomes of participating youth, reducing their dependence on SSI, increasing family income, and reducing overall household dependence on public benefits. MPR will be conducting evaluations in all PROMISE Initiatives nationally. They include the ASPIRE consortium and the California, New York, Wisconsin, Maryland, and Arkansas projects. ASPIRE will cooperate with MPR and conduct formative evaluations during the operation of the project. The ASPIRE Formative Evaluation Team comprises evaluators from The University of Utah, The University of Kansas, and the University of Montana. A management information system will be developed and used to compile and analyze all ASPIRE data.

## ASPIRE Arizona

The ASPIRE project is implementing an experimental design study over the next three years, ending in September 2018. As a federal research study, the program is enrolling teens and their families who qualify and assigning them to one of two different groups. The list of qualifying teens is being provided by the Social Security Administration (SSA). The six ASPIRE states are partnering to recruit and enroll 2,000 youth ages 14 to 16 who receive SSI to participate. One-half of the youth (1,000) will receive a variety of core interventions to improve their educational and employment outcomes.

The state of Arizona is enrolling approximately 1,050 youth; of the 1,050 youth, 50% will be assigned to a treatment group and 50% assigned to a control group. ASPIRE Arizona began recruiting and enrolling youth and their families in February 2015. The two groups will be compared in the future to determine the effectiveness of the enhanced services and to inform future policy and practices.

Youth in the treatment group, those to receive ASPIRE services, will be assigned a case manager to assist in identifying services tailored to the youth and family needs. In addition to case management, they will receive benefits counseling, financial education and capability training, and parent education and training over the course of this

project. The control group, those receiving their usual services, will continue receiving the services without any negative impact by this research. The control group will access current services in a typical manner although they will receive additional resources for the families and youth to explore.

## ASPIRE Interventions



## ASPIRE Arizona Case Management

ASPIRE will provide a consistent model of case management across all consortium sites. The model will consist of (1) a family-centered assessment of needs of youth and adult family members by means of a standard interview guide developed for the ASPIRE project; (2) development of a family “readiness plan” with separate components for youth and parent/family members; (3) coordination of interventions that will over time lead to paid employment for the youth before leaving school; (4) facilitation of interventions both at school and at home, including training for youth that will support increasing self-determination by youth; and (5) coordination of other services and support when a participant’s need is identified.

Case managers (CMs) will be knowledgeable of services available in the partner systems and when to make appropriate referrals. The CMs will coordinate joint planning meetings with agencies and providers serving both the youth and family members. The case managers will

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also facilitate growth in youth self-determination through training for treatment group youth and family members and by collaborating with the school to use curricula that support self-determination. The CMs will facilitate youth and family participation in benefits counseling and financial education training.

The expected outcomes for case management are for youth and family members to have a family-centered assessment, participate in a planning process aimed at school and job success and family financial stability, have services coordinated, and be satisfied with the case management services.

The case managers located within the Arizona Department of Education/Exceptional Student Services have been working diligently at recruiting and enrolling statewide. This has been a collaborative effort with case managers working alongside many state and community agencies. These agencies have not only been receptive to ASPIRE Arizona's promotional efforts but also been more than willing to help the Arizona team to accommodate the needs of the families and engage in ASPIRE conversations.

### **Proposed Benefits**

The disabilities represented in this group are diverse, and the varying support needs among these youth with disabilities are enormous. The targeted age range (14–16) is a critical time in the development of any child's vocational expectations and readiness. A child with a disability may miss opportunities for transition to adulthood because of delayed development, health priorities, or low expectations in general. Families of youth with disabilities may have fewer expectations for them to perform chores around home or school, and the youth may have fewer opportunities for employment. Additionally, where adult unemployment is high, youth with disabilities from low-income rural school districts have even more limited opportunities for exploring career options and finding employment. Currently, no system acts to coordinate education, employment, and health services for youth with disabilities transitioning beyond school. Because of this lack of a coordinating function, youth have a difficult time overcoming barriers, such as incompatible eligibility processes, waiting lists, lack of information about options and resources, and disincentives to work, including reductions in housing assistance and food stamps.

The goal of this research project is to examine whether providing case management services to youth who receive SSI will improve postsecondary employment and self-sufficiency outcomes. Participants in the project will know that they were significant contributors to a study that will provide valuable information about how to effectively deliver services to youth and families in environments with low population densities with limited resources; in environments that require lengthy travel for services, and in environments with great cultural diversity. Youth and family participants have the opportunity to promote new or additional insight as to what services are available and how or where to access services. Participation by the youth and their families will also help the SSA and the Department of Education learn more about how to deliver services to youth as they transition from high school to adulthood, and this participation will ultimately benefit the communities where these young people live.

For further information, contact the ASPIRE Arizona team at 1-844-260-2890.

You can also contact:

- Sang Hee Kim, ASPIRE Program Administrator, Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families at 602-524-9148 or [skim@az.gov](mailto:skim@az.gov).
- James Rivera, ASPIRE Director of Case Management, Arizona Department of Education at 602-542-2810 or [james.rivera@azed.gov](mailto:james.rivera@azed.gov). Also visit us at [www.aspirewest.org](http://www.aspirewest.org) or check out our new three-minute video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UK9A5iYAMtE>

ASPIRE is a project of the U.S. Department of Education. ASPIRE is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs through the PROMISE initiative (Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income, #H418P130009). ASPIRE includes Arizona, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Utah.



# Directors Institute

This year's Directors Institute, *Working Together, Achieving Results*, will have national and local experts providing strategies and instructional practices that support the work of special education administrators to support Arizona students with special needs.

## National Presenters

Art Cernosia • Doug Fisher • Marilyn Friend • Fierce Conversations  
• Patrick Graham • Laura Riffel • Carol Ann Tomlinson

**September 29, 30, and October 1**



Directors Institute website:  
<http://tinyurl.com/qxu9rao>

